
NEWS From:

Congressman Mike Honda

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Gephardt, Honda, House Dems Move to Assist Laid-off Airline Workers

Washington, D.C.-- Today, U.S. Congressman Mike Honda (D-San Jose) joined with Democratic Leader, Richard Gephardt (D-MO) and Democratic Members of Congress to announce the Displaced Workers Assistance Act, a bill to provide financial assistance, training, and health care coverage to employees of the airline and related industries who lose their jobs as a direct result of the attacks on September 11, 2001.

“As Congress moves to enhance the security our civil aviation system and bolster our economy it is essential that we do not turn our backs on the tens of thousands of Americans in the aviation industries who will be laid off as a result of these attacks,” said Honda. **“Our approach to economic recovery must not only be a ‘top down’ business-driven approach that helps companies, but a ‘bottom up’ consumer-driven strategy that can provide stability to working Americans impacted by this crisis.”**

The bill would provide income support to individuals who exhaust their 26-week eligibility for state unemployment insurance would be eligible for an additional 52 weeks of cash payments funded entirely by the federal government. Individuals who do not meet their states' requirements for unemployment insurance would receive 26 weeks of federally financed unemployment insurance. Individuals who would not be expected to return to their jobs within the airline industry would be eligible for retraining benefits. Individuals who would not be expected to return to their jobs, but who may find some alternative job within the airline industry, would be eligible for upgrade training. Participation in training is not a requirement for participation in the assistance package.

“Just as we have moved quickly to safeguard the continued existence of our airline industry— so too, should we move to protect the working men and women that represent the lifeblood of that industry,” continued Honda.

The bill also provides that the federal government would fully reimburse eligible individuals for their COBRA premiums. Individuals who do not qualify for COBRA and are otherwise uninsured would be eligible for Medicaid with the federal government covering 100 percent of the premiums. These health care benefits would last for a maximum of 18 months.

Only employees of airlines, commercial airline manufacturers, suppliers to airlines, and airports would be eligible for relief. Only those people who lost their jobs as a direct result of the attacks of September 11 or security measures taken in response to the attacks, as determined by the Secretary of Labor. Companion legislation (S. 1454), has been introduced by Senator Carnahan in the U.S. Senate.